

JOHN KINZIE

Chicago's Pioneer

A SKETCH

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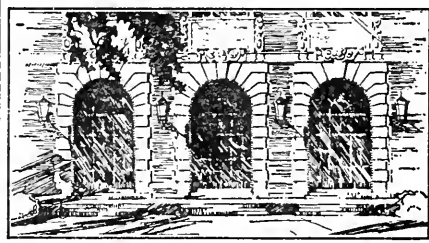
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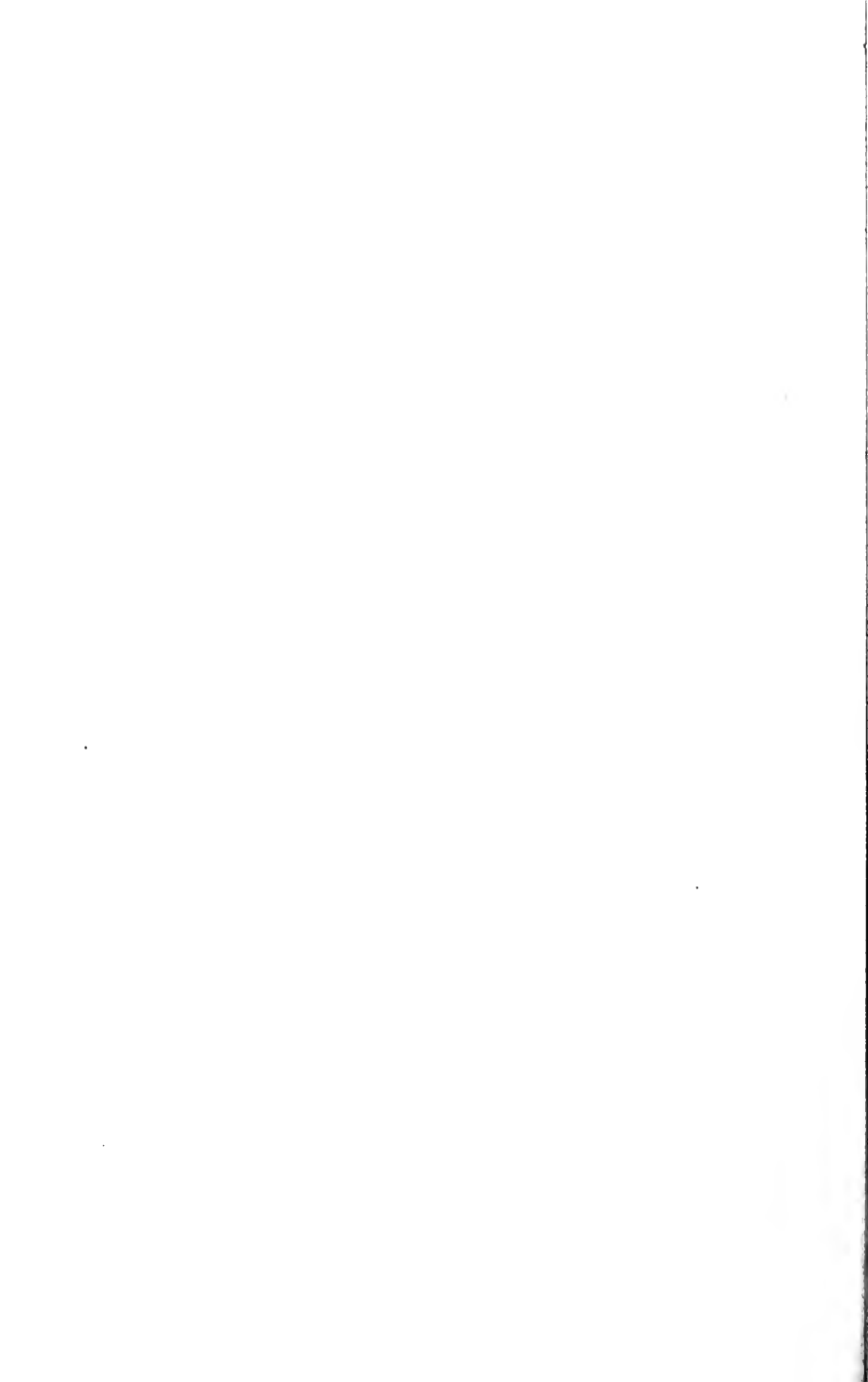
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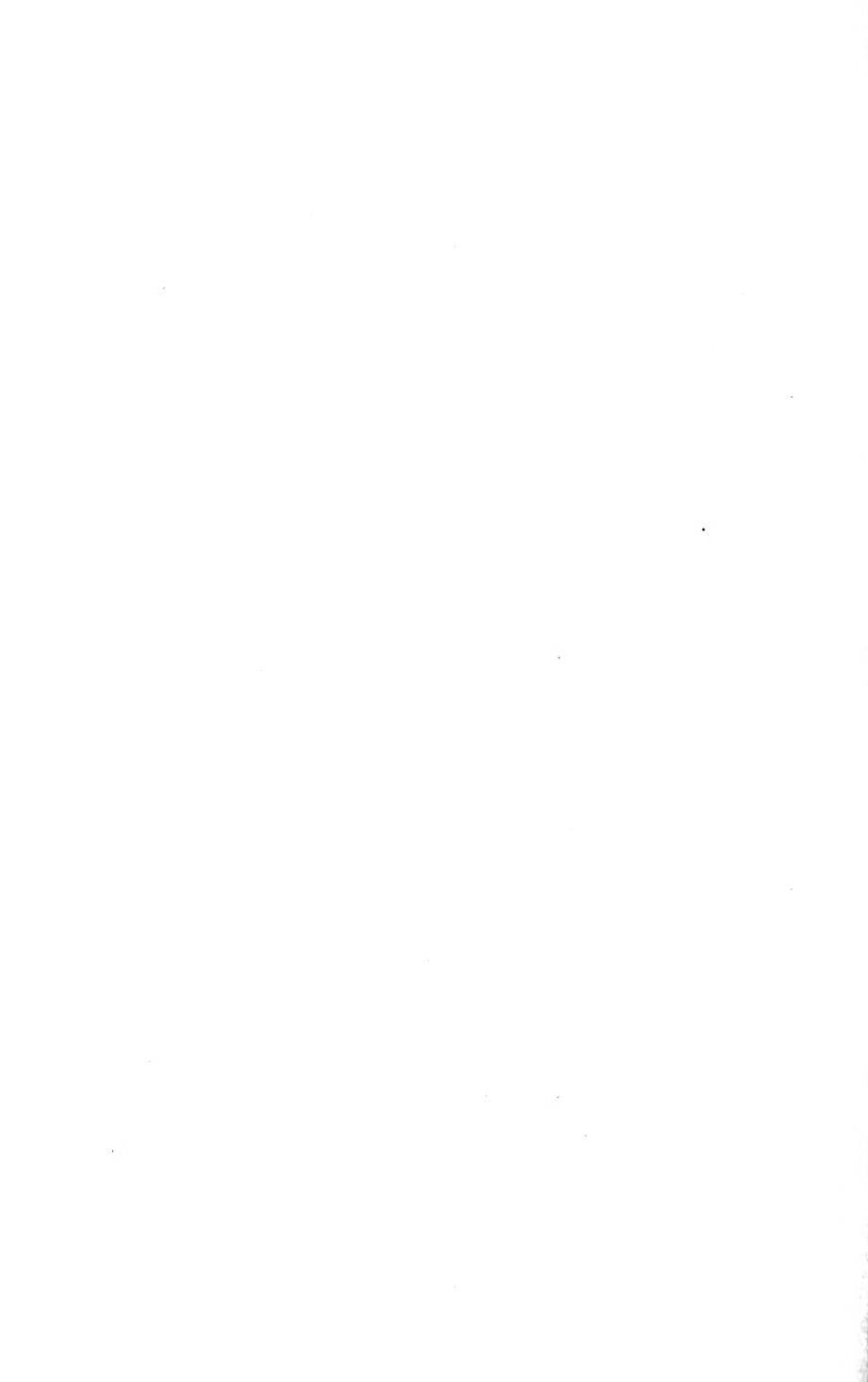
JOHN KINZIE

The "Father of Chicago"

A SKETCH

BY

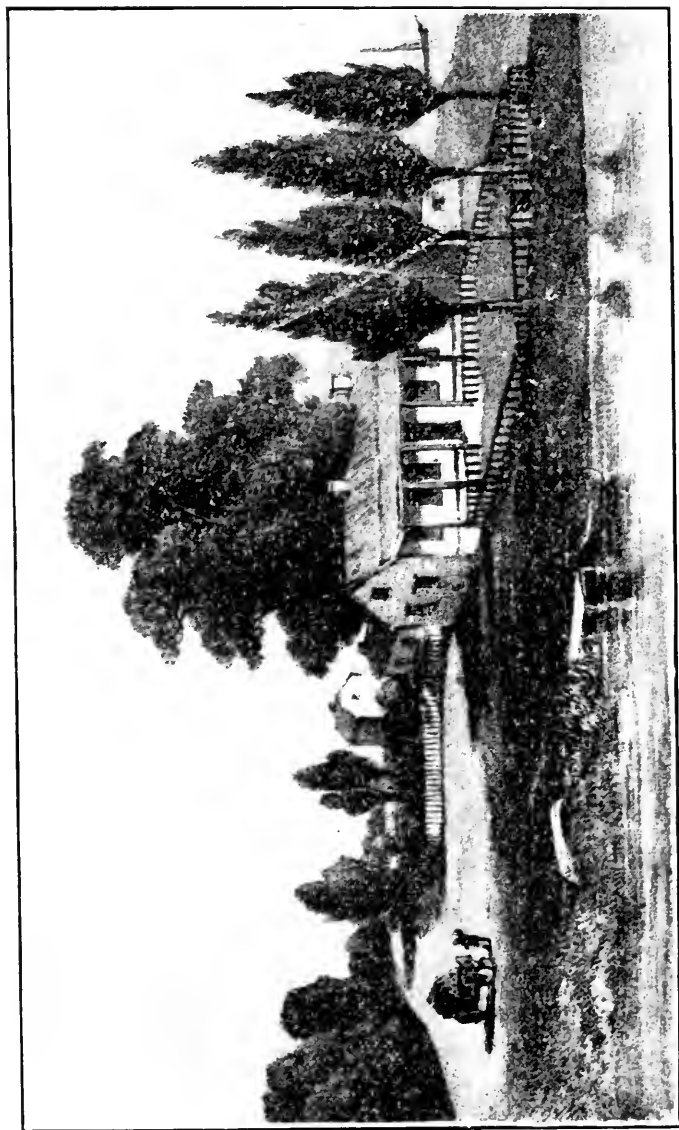
ELEANOR LYTLÉ KINZIE GORDON



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ELEANOR KINZIE GORDON



RESIDENCE OF JOHN KINZIE, ESQ.

JOHN KINZIE

A SKETCH

John McKenzie was the son of Surgeon John McKenzie of the 60th or Royal American Regiment of Foot, and of Anne Haleyburton, the widow of Chaplain Wm. Haleyburton of the First or Royal American Regiment of Foot.

Mrs. Haleyburton had one child by Maj. Haleyburton, a daughter named Alice, born January 22nd, 1758. This event took place just before the regiment embarked from Ireland for America, and the Haleyburtons were consequently delayed for several weeks before rejoining the command in Quebec.

Major Haleyburton died soon after their arrival in America, and his widow a couple of years later married Surgeon John McKenzie. Their son "John" was born in Quebec, December 3rd, 1763.

Major McKenzie survived the birth of his son but a few months and his widow took for her third husband Mr. William Forsyth, of New York City.

Mr. and Mrs. Forsyth had five sons, William, George, James, Thomas, and Robert Allan.

In the old family Bible is the following touching record of an event that occurred after the family had removed from New York to Detroit:

"George Forsyth was lost in the woods 6th of Aug., 1775, when Henry Hays and Mark Stirling ran away and left him. The remains of Geo. Forsyth were found by an Indian the 2nd of Oct., 1776, close by the Prairie Ronde."

There was nothing to identify the child except the auburn curls of his hair and the little boots he had worn.

In this same old Bible the "Mc" is dropped in recording the birth of "John Kinsey" (so spelled), thus indicating that he was known as John Kinsey, (or, as he himself spelled it, "Kinzie") from early childhood.

Young John grew up under the care and supervision of his step-father, Mr. Forsyth, until at the age of ten he began his adventurous career by running away.

He and his two half brothers attended a school at Williamsburg, L. I., escorted there every Monday by a servant, who came to bring them home every Friday. One fine afternoon when the servant came to take the boys home Master Johnny was missing. An immediate search was made, but not a trace of him could be found. His mother was almost frantic. The mysterious disappearance of her bright, handsome boy was a fearful blow. Days passed without tidings of the lost one, and hope fled. The only solution suggested was, that he might have been accidently drowned, and his body swept out to sea.

Meantime Master John was very much alive.

He had determined to go to Quebec to try, as he afterwards explained, to discover some of his father's relations.

He had managed to find a sloop which was just going up the Hudson, and with the confidence and audacity of a child he stepped gaily on board and set forth on his travels.

Most fortunately for him he attracted the notice of a passenger on the vessel who was going to Quebec, and who began to question the lonely little lad. He became so interested in the boy that he took him in charge, paid his fare and landed him safely in his native city.

But here, alas, Master Johnnie soon found himself stranded. Very cold, very hungry and very miserable, he was wandering down one of the streets of Quebec when his attention was attracted by a glittering array of watches and silver in a shop window, where a man was sitting repairing a clock.

Johnny stood gazing wistfully in; his yellow curls, blue eyes, and pathetic little face appealed to the kind silversmith, who beckoned him into the shop and soon

learned his story. "And what are you going to do now?" asked the man. "I am going to work" replied "ten-year-old" valiantly. "Why, what could you do?" laughed the man. "I could do anything you told me to do, if you just showed me how to do it," said John. The result was that John got the job.

The silversmith had no children, and as the months rolled on he grew more and more fond of John. He taught him as much of his trade as the lad could acquire in the three years of his stay in Quebec.

This knowledge was of great value to him when later on in his life it enabled him to secure the friendship and assistance of the Indians by fashioning various ornaments and "tokens" for them from the silver money paid to them as annuities by the United States Government. The Indians gave him the name of "Shaw-nee-aw-kee" or the Silver Man, and by that name he was known among all the tribes of the Northwest.

These happy and useful years drew to a close. As John was one day walking down the street, a gentlemen from New York stopped him and said: "Are you not Johnny Kinzie?" John admitted that he was—and the gentleman armed with the astonishing news and the boy's address, promptly communicated with Mr. Forsyth, who at once came to Quebec and took the runaway home.

I dare say his rejoicing mother saved him from the sound thrashing he richly deserved at the hands of his step-father.

John had had enough of running away, and was now content to stay at home and buckle down to his books. The few letters of his which remain and are preserved in the Chicago Historical Society show the results of an excellent education.

The roving spirit was still alive in him, however. Mr. Forsyth had moved West and settled in Detroit, and when John was about eighteen years old he persuaded his step-father to fit him out as an Indian trader.

This venture proved a great success. Before he was one and twenty, young Kinzie had established two trading posts,—one at Sandusky and one at Maumee, and

was pushing towards the West, where he later started a depot at St. Joseph, Michigan.

In all of his new and arduous career he was greatly aided and protected by John Harris, the famous Indian Scout and trader mentioned by Irving in his *Life of Washington* (Volume 1, Chapter XII.) In grateful appreciation of these kindnesses he named his son "John Harris" for this valued friend.

John Kinzie's success as an Indian trader was almost phenomenal. He acquired their language with great facility; he respected their customs, and they soon found that his "word was as good as his bond." He was a keen trader, not allowing himself to be cheated, nor attempting to cheat them. He quickly gained the confidence and esteem of the various tribes with which he dealt, and the personal friendship of many of their most powerful chiefs, who showed themselves ready to shield him in danger, and to rescue him from harm at the risk of their lives.

An event in the life of John Kinzie may be here stated, and the romantic and sensational tales concerning it, as put forth by some historians, corrected. In the year 1775, the two little girls of a Mr. Isaac McKenzie were stolen from their home in Giles County Virginia, near the Kanawha River, by a party of Shawnee Indians. Margaret was ten years old, and Elizabeth was two years younger. They had been captives among these savages for ten years, when a trader named John Clark, and John Kinzie heard of them, and that there was a plan on foot to compel these young women to marry certain men of the tribe. Kinzie and Clark determined to rescue them. By means of a liberal expenditure of guns, ammunition, blankets, etc., they succeeded in ransoming the two young women. Margaret took up her abode with Kinzie, and Elizabeth with Clark.

When, several years later, Isaac McKenzie learned of his daughters' safety he came West to claim them.

By this time Margaret had three children, James, William and Elizabeth. In spite of Mr. Kinzie's offer to marry her Margaret refused to remain with him, but taking her children went back to Virginia with her father, where she promptly asserted her freedom from any

Catchester Township

Upper Canada
Registered in the
Marriage register
for the Western
District on the 20:
day of Sept: A.D 1803

James Allan
C. P. W. D.

W. & W.

Dec. 21. 1803.

Colchester Township

This is to Certify that John Kingie &
Eleanor Whillip Widow, were joined together in
Holy Matrimony, in the Township of Colchester, in
the County of York; in the Western District of
Upper Canada, in the presence of the under-
subscribed witnesses, on Monday Jan'y 28. 1798.

Wm. Wm.
Eleanor Kingie
Widow's

by Rev. Wm. Hall -
D. G. P. W. D.

Wm. Wm. A. Smith

Robt. Forrester

" " " "

Thos. Joseph

Robert Little

legal ties elsewhere by marrying a man named Benjamin Hall.

Margaret McKenzie's desertion of the man who had saved her from a cruel fate can only be condoned by the fact that she had spent ten years of her life among savages, and that the prospect of a return to her early home and the comforts of civilization appealed to her too strongly to be resisted when contrasted with the hardships of life on the frontier.

After the breaking up of his home and the loss of his children, Mr. Kinzie threw himself with restless energy into his business. He made long and arduous journeys, extending his trading posts far into the West.

When in the neighborhood of Detroit, he made his home with his half-brother, William Forsyth, who had married a Miss Margaret Lytle, daughter of Col. William Lytle of Virginia. Here he was always a welcome guest; and here he met Mrs. Forsyth's younger sister, Eleanor. She was the widow of a British Officer, Capt. Daniel McKillip, who had been killed in a sortie from Ft. Defiance. Since his death, she, and her little daughter Margaret, had made their home with the Forsyths.

John Kinzie fell desperately in love with the handsome young widow, and on January 23rd, 1798, they were married,

Mr. Kinzie continued to extend his business still farther West, and in October, 1803, when his son "John Harris" was but three months old, he moved with his family to Chicago, where he purchased the trading establishment of a Frenchman named Le Mai.

Here, cut off from the world at large, with no society but the military at Fort Dearborn, the Kinzies lived in great contentment, and in the enjoyment of all the comforts, together with many of the luxuries of life. The first white child born outside of Fort Dearborn was their little daughter Ellen Marion, on December 20, 1805. Next came Maria, born September 28, 1807. Then, lastly, Robert Allan, born February 8, 1810.

By degrees, Mr. Kinzie established still more remote posts, all contributing to the parent one at Chicago. At Milwaukee, with the Menomenees; at Rock River with

the Winnebagoes and the Pottawatamies; on the Illinois River and the Kankakee with the Pottawatamies of the Prairies; and with the Kickapoos in what was called "Le Large," being the widely extended district afterwards converted into Sangamon County. He was appointed Sub-Indian Agent and Government Interpreter, in which capacities he rendered valuable services.

The killing of a Frenchman named Lalime by John Kinzie occurred about the year 1810, under the following circumstances: Lalime became insanely jealous of Mr. Kinzie's success as a rival trader, and was unwise enough to threaten to take Kinzie's life. The latter only laughed at the reports, saying "Threatened men live long, and I am not worrying over Lalime's wild talk." Several of his staunchest Indian friends, however, continued to warn him, and he at last consented to carry some sort of weapon in case Lalime really had the folly to attack him. He accordingly took a carving knife from the house and started to sharpen it on a grindstone in the woodshed. Young John stood beside him much interested in this novel proceeding. "What are you doing, Father?" he asked. "Sharpening this knife, my son," was the reply. "What for?" said John. "Go into the house," replied his father, "and don't ask questions about things that don't concern you." A few days passed. Nothing happened, but Mr. Kinzie carried the knife.

Mrs. Kinzie's daughter by her first marriage was now seventeen years old, and was the wife of Lieut. Linai Thomas Helm, one of the officers stationed at Fort Dearborn, and Mr. Kinzie frequently went over there to spend the evening. One very dark night he sauntered over to the Fort, and just as he was entering the enclosure, a man sprang out from behind the gate post and plunged a knife into his neck. It was Lalime. Quick as a flash Mr. Kinzie drew his knife and dealt Lalime a furious blow, and a fatal one. The man fell like a log into the river below. Mr. Kinzie staggered home, covered with blood from the deep wound.

The late Gurdon S. Hubbard in a letter to a grandson of John Kinzie, gives the following account of the affair:

143 Locust St.,
Chicago, Ill., Feb. 6th, 1884.

Arthur M. Kinzie, Esq.,

My Dear Sir,

I have yours of 5th. You corroborate what I have said about your grandfather killing Lalime as far as you state. I am glad you do. I cannot forget what I heard from your grandmother and Mrs Helm. They said your grandfather, coming in bloody, said "I have killed Lalime. A guard will be sent from the Fort to take me. Dress my neck quickly!" Your Grandmother did so, remarking "They shall not take you to the fort—come with me to the woods." She hid him, came home, and soon a Sergeant with guard appeared. Could not find your grandfather.

After the excitement was over, the officers began to reason on the subject calmly, for Lalime was highly respected, good social company, educated. They came to the conclusion that the act was in self defence. The history of Chicago, by Mr. Andreas will soon be out. He sent me the account relating to your grandfather to revise. Much in it incorrect, which I have explained.

Can't you come and see me?

Your friend,

G. S. Hubbard.

The above tallies with the account held by the family, except that it was always stated that after the excitement subsided, which it did in a few weeks, Mr. Kinzie sent word to the Commanding Officer at the Fort that he wished to come in, give himself up and have a fair trial. This was done. The fresh wounds in his neck, which had barely missed the jugular vein, and the testimony given as to the threats Lalime had uttered, resulted in an immediate verdict of justifiable homicide.

In the meantime some of Lalime's friends conceived the idea that it would be suitable punishment to Mr. Kinzie to bury his victim directly in front of the Kinzie home, where he must necessarily behold the grave every time he passed out of his own gate. Great was their chagrin and dissatisfaction, however, when Mr. Kinzie, far from being annoyed at their action, proceeded to make Lalime's grave his especial care. Flowers were

planted on it and it was kept in most beautiful order. Many a half hour the Kinzie children had longed to spend in play, was occupied by their father's orders in raking the dead leaves away from Lalime's grave and watering its flowers.

During all these years and up to the spring of 1812, a constant and friendly intercourse had been maintained between the troops in Fort Dearborn and the Indians. It is true that the principal men of the Pottawatamie Nation, like those of most of the tribes, went yearly to Fort Malden in Canada, to receive a large amount of presents with which the British Government had been for many years in the habit of purchasing their alliance; and it was well known that many of the Pottawatamies, as well as the Winnebagoes, had been engaged with the Ottawas and the Shawnees at the Battle of Tippecanoe the preceding autumn; yet, as the principal chiefs of all the bands in the neighborhood appeared to be on the most amicable terms with the Americans, no interruption of their harmony was at any time anticipated. But a terrible tragedy was soon to awaken both troops and settlers from their fancied security.

During the afternoon of April 7th, a party of ten or twelve Indians, dressed and painted, arrived at Lee's place, a farm on the Chicago River about four miles from its mouth, and now occupied by a Mr. White and three persons employed by him to assist in working the farm.

The Indians, according to the custom among savages, entered the house and seated themselves without ceremony. One of the family, a Frenchman, remarked: "I don't like the looks of these Indians. They are none of our friends. I know by their dress and their paint that they are not Pottawatamies." Another of the family, a discharged soldier, then said to a boy who was present: "If that is so we had better get away from here. Say nothing but do as I do." It was growing late and the soldier, followed by the boy, strolled down to the river bank, where a couple of canoes were tied. The Indians asked by signs where they were going and were told that the cattle in the fields across the river had to be foddered, and that they would then return to get their supper. They accordingly crossed in the canoes, and after making a show of collecting the cattle and pulling some hay for

them, they gradually made a circuit till their movements were concealed by the haystacks and then took to the woods, which were close at hand, and made for the fort. After they had run about a quarter of a mile they heard the discharge of two guns successively, which they supposed had been leveled at the companions they had left behind. On their way they called across the river to warn the Burns family, and then hastened on to the Fort. Realizing the great danger now threatening the Burns family, a gallant young officer of the Fort, Lieut. Ronan, offered to go with five or six soldiers to their rescue. They ascended the river in a scow, took the mother with her one-day-old-infant and brought her with the rest of her family safely to the fort.

A cannon was fired from the fort as a signal to warn all outside the fort of danger, and the Indians hearing it, having completed their murderous work, hastily retreated to their home on the Rock river. From traders out in the Indian country it was learned subsequently that these murders were committed by a party of Winnebagoes who had come into this neighborhood "to take scalps," and that their purpose was to proceed down the river from Lee's place and to murder every white man outside the fort. But for the firing of the cannon they would have carried out their sanguinary design.

The inhabitants outside the fort consisted only of a few families of discharged soldiers and half-breeds. These now entrenched themselves in the Agency House which stood on the esplanade, west of the fort, and was included in the fortifications. The family of Mr. Kinzie took refuge in the fort, where they remained until, after a few weeks of peace had reassured them, they returned to their home across the river.

Some months of quiet now ensued.

On the afternoon of August 7th, a Pottawatamie Chief named Win-ne-meg, or Cat-fish, arrived at the post, bringing dispatches from General Hull. These announced the declaration of war between the United States and Great Britain. Also, that General Hull, at the head of the Northwestern Army, had arrived at Detroit, and that the Island of Mackinac had fallen into the hands of the British.

The orders to Capt. Heald were, to "evacuate the fort if practicable, and in that event to distribute all the United States property contained in the fort and in the United States factory, or agency, among the Indians in the neighborhood." After delivering his dispatches, Winnemeg requested a private interview with Mr. Kinzie. He told Mr. Kinzie that he knew the contents of the communication he had brought and that he hoped Capt. Heald would not attempt to evacuate the fort, giving as his reason the fact that the garrison was well supplied with enough provisions and ammunition to last six months, or until reinforcements could be sent to their assistance. But in case Capt. Heald decided upon leaving the post, he urged the necessity of doing it immediately, before the Pottawatamies, through whose country they must pass, could make any plans to intercept them. He suggested that the fort might be evacuated, leaving everything standing, as possibly while the Indians were engaged in the partition of the spoils, the troops might effect their retreat unmolested.

Mr. Kinzie strongly advised this course, but it did not meet the approbation of the Commanding Officer, who replied that he should carry out the orders he had received, but that he could not do so until he had collected the Indians and had distributed the United States property among them, as General Hull specified.

The order for evacuating the fort was read next morning upon parade.

On the 12th of August, the general despondency was somewhat relieved by the arrival of Capt. Wells, with a band of 27 friendly Miamis. Of this brave man, so well known on the frontier, a word must here be said. When a boy he had been stolen from his friends, the family of Nathaniel Pope in Kentucky. He was recovered by them but later voluntarily returned to his Indian friends and married a Miami woman, and became a Chief of the Nation. Hearing at Ft. Wayne of the order for evacuating the fort at Chicago, and knowing the hostility of the Pottawatamies, he had made a rapid march across country to prevent the exposure of his relative, Captain Heald, and his troops, to certain destruction.

On the afternoon of Captain Wells' arrival (August 12th) a council was held with the Indians who had been



summoned from the neighboring villages. The officers had been secretly warned that there was a plot for the young chiefs to fall upon and massacre them while in council. They could not persuade Captain Heald, however of the truth of their information, and he left them for the council, accompanied only by Captain Wells and Mr. Kinzie. Immediately after their departure, the officers took command of the blockhouses which overlooked the esplanade where the council was held, and pointed the cannon so as to command the whole assembly. By this means probably the lives of the whites who were present were preserved.

The officers of the fort comprised Capt. Heald, Lieut. Helm (the son-in-law of Mrs. Kinzie,) Ensign Ronan,—the two latter very young men, and the Surgeon, Dr. Van Voorhees. The command consisted of about seventy-five men.

As Captain Heald showed no intention of calling a council of his officers they waited on him to inquire what course he meant to pursue.

He informed them that he intended to evacuate the fort. They strongly remonstrated with him on the following grounds:

First, it was highly improbable that the command would be permitted to pass through the country in safety to Ft. Wayne (Detroit) for though it had been said that some of the Chiefs had opposed an attack upon the fort, planned the preceding autumn, yet it was well known that they had been actuated in that matter solely by motives of private regard for one family—that of Mr. Kinzie—and not from any general friendship towards Americans. And that at any rate it was hardly expected that these few individuals would be able to control the whole tribe who were thirsting for blood.

In the next place, their march must necessarily be slow on account of the women and children, of whom there were a number among the detachment—and of the men a number were old and invalid; therefore, since the evacuation was left discretionary it would be wiser to remain where they were, and fortify themselves as strongly as possible. Succor might arrive before they could be

attacked by a British force from Makinac, and it would be preferable at any rate to fall into the hands of the British rather than to become the victims of savages.

Captain Heald argued in reply that a special order had been issued by the War Department that no post should be surrendered without battle being given, and that his force was too small to risk an engagement, and that he would be censured if he remained at the fort when there seemed to be a chance of making a safe march through. Therefore, he thought it better to assemble the Indians, distribute the Government property, and offer them a large reward for an escort of Indians to see them safely to Ft. Wayne. He added that he had full confidence in the Indians and that the knowledge of the capture of Mackinac by the British had been kept a profound secret from the Indians, as well as from the soldiers.

From this time the officers held themselves aloof, and though they spoke seldom on the subject, they considered Captain Heald's plan little short of madness. Dissatisfaction, amounting almost to insubordination, was to be noted among the soldiers also.

After the War council, Captain Wells took a survey of arms, ammunition and provisions in the fort and found a sufficient supply to last three months. He determined to make a final effort to persuade Captain Heald to destroy the ammunition and guns before carrying out the order to distribute the Fort's property among the Indians and he insisted that Helm and Kinzie should join with him in the interview with Captain Heald.

Mr. Kinzie, who understood well not only the Indian character, but the tone of feeling prevailing among them, reminded Captain Heald that since the troubles with the Indians on the Wabash and its vicinity, there had been apparently a settled plan of hostility towards the whites, in consequence of which it had been the policy of the Americans to withhold from them arms, ammunition and whatever would enable them to carry on their warfare upon the defenceless inhabitants of the frontier. Mr. Kinzie also recalled to Captain Heald how he himself had left home for Detroit the previous autumn, but upon receiving when he reached Du Charmes (now Ypsilanti)

the news of the Battle of Tippecanoe, he had at once returned to Chicago, that he might dispatch orders to his traders to furnish no ammunition to the Indians; in consequence of which all they had on hand was secreted; and such traders as had not started for their wintering grounds took neither powder nor shot with them.

Captain Heald hesitated, but remarked that his orders had been to divide everything among the Indians, and that they had heard this order read on parade. He said it was not sound policy to lie to the Indians; that it would irritate them to disappoint them, and might lead to the destruction of his men.

Mr. Kinzie then offered to take upon himself the responsibility of destroying the ammunition; and, in order to shield Captain Heald from possible future censure by his superior officers, and to turn away the wrath of the Indians, he personally wrote an order purporting to be from General Hull, cancelling his previous instructions to give away the ammunition, and ordering Captain Heald to destroy it. To this plan Captain Heald consented, and on the 13th all the goods, blankets, calicoes, paints, etc., were distributed to the Indians as stipulated. That same evening the ammunition was thrown into a well in the sallyport and the liquor was secretly carried down to the river, the heads of the barrels knocked in and their contents poured into the stream.

All the muskets not necessary for the command on the march were broken up, and with the bags of shot, flints, gun-screws, etc., were thrown into the well.

Notwithstanding the attempts at secrecy, the Indians had learned of the destruction of the ammunition and of the liquor, and were greatly enraged at it. Murmurs and threats were everywhere heard among them and it was evident that they would wreak their vengeance on the troops at the earliest opportunity.

Among the Chiefs there were several who retained a personal regard for some of the troops at the post—and in particular for Mr. Kinzie and his family. One of the most conspicuous of these friendly chiefs was "Black Partridge." On the evening succeeding the council he came to the quarters of Captain Heald. "Father," said he, "I

come to deliver up to you the medal I wear. It was given me by the Americans and I have long worn it in token of our mutual friendship. But our young men are determined to imbrue their hands in the blood of the whites. I cannot restrain them, and I will not wear a token of peace while I am compelled to act as an enemy."

Had further evidence been wanting, this circumstance would have proved to the devoted band the justice of their melancholy anticipations.

The morning of the 15th arrived. All things were in readiness, and nine o'clock was the hour named for starting. Early that same day, Mr. Kinzie received a message from "To-pee-nee-bee" a chief of the St. Joseph's band, informing him that mischief was intended by the Pottawatamies, who had engaged to escort the detachment, and urging him to relinquish his design of accompanying the troops by land, promising that a boat containing himself and family should be permitted to pass in safety to St. Joseph's. Mr. Kinzie gladly accepted this offer on behalf of his family, but firmly declined it for himself. He had determined to accompany the command on their perilous march. He hoped that his presence with the troops might operate as a restraint on the fury of the savages, so warmly were the greater part of them attached to himself and his family; yet he fully realized the possibility of a savage outbreak that would spare neither friend nor foe.

Seldom does one find a man with the personal courage and civic virtue of John Kinzie, who thus refused safety for himself in order to stand or fall with his countrymen, and who, as stern as any Spartan, bade farewell to his family and cast in his lot with that little handful who went forward to almost certain destruction.

In accordance with the promise given to convey Mr. Kinzie's family to a place of safety under the care of some friendly Indians, they were now placed in boats to be carried to St. Joseph's, and thence to Detroit. The party consisted of Mrs. Kinzie; her four children (the eldest nine and the youngest two years of age;) their nurse, Gruette; one of Mr. Kinzie's clerks; the boatmen and the two Indians who acted as their protectors.

Scarcely had they started when the Indian Chief To-pee-nee-bee arrived to detain them where they were. In breathless expectation Mrs. Kinzie sat. She was a woman of uncommon energy and strength of character, but her heart died within her as she folded her arms around her helpless infants and gazed upon the departure of her husband and eldest child (Mrs. Helm) to what might be a frightful death. As the troops left the fort, the band struck up the "Dead March." Captain Wells with his little band of Miamis was in the lead. His face was blackened (Indian fashion) in token of his impending fate.

They had hardly marched a mile and a half along the lake shore when Captain Wells, who, with his Miamis was somewhat in advance, came galloping back. "The Indians are about to attack us," he shouted furiously. "Form instantly and charge them." Scarcely were these words uttered when a volley was showered from among the sandhills. The troops were hastily lined up and charged up the bank. Capt. Wells rode up to the Pottawattamies and, brandishing his tomahawk, he called out "You have deceived the Americans and us. I will be the first to head a party of Americans to return and punish your treachery!" The battle raged only a few minutes, but most of the whites were killed or wounded in the first onslaught.

Mrs. Helm's account of her rescue, given in her own words, was as follows:

"The troops behaved most gallantly. They were but a handful, but they seemed resolved to sell their lives as dearly as possible. Our horses pranced and bounded, and could hardly be restrained as the balls whistled among them. I drew off a little, and gazed upon my husband and father, who were yet unharmed. I felt that my hour was come, and endeavored to forget those I loved, and prepare myself for my approaching fate.

"At this moment a young Indian raised his tomahawk at me. By springing aside, I partially avoided the blow, which was intended for my skull, but which alighted on my shoulder. I seized him around the neck, and while exerting my utmost efforts to get possession of his

scalping-knife, which hung in a scabbard over his breast, I was dragged from his grasp by another and older Indian. The latter bore me struggling and resisting towards the lake.

"I was immediately plunged into the water and held there with a forcible hand, notwithstanding my resistance. I soon perceived, however, that the object of my captor was not to drown me, for he held me firmly in such a position as to place my head above water. This reassured me, and, regarding him attentively, I soon recognized, in spite of the paint with which he was disguised, The Black Partridge.

"When the firing had nearly subsided my preserver bore me from the water and conducted me up the sandbanks. It was a burning August morning, and walking through the sand in my drenched condition was inexpressibly painful and fatiguing. I stooped and took off my shoes to free them from the sand with which they were nearly filled, when a squaw seized and carried them off, and I was obliged to proceed without them.

"When we had gained the prairie, I was met by my father, who told me that my husband was safe and but slightly wounded. They led me gently back towards the Chicago River, along the southern bank of which was the Pottawattamie encampment. At one time I was placed upon a horse without a saddle, but finding the motion insupportable, I sprang off. Supported partly by my conductor, Black Partridge, and partly by another Indian Pee-so-tum, who held dangling in his hand a scalp, which by the black ribbon around the queue I recognized as that of Captain Wells, I dragged my fainting steps to one of the wigwams.

"The wife of Wau-bee-nee-mah, a chief from the Illinois River, was standing near, and, seeing my exhausted condition, she seized a kettle, dipped up some water from a stream that flowed near, threw into it some maple sugar; and, stirring it up with her hand, gave it to me to drink. This act of kindness, in the midst of so many horrors, touched me most sensibly; but my attention was soon diverted to other objects.

"As the noise of the firing grew gradually less, and the stragglers from the victorious party came dropping



STATUE OF FORT DEARBORN INDIAN
MASSACRE 1812



in, I received confirmation of what my father had hurriedly communicated in our rencontre on the lake shore; viz., that the whites had surrendered, after the loss of about two thirds of their number. They had stipulated, through the interpreter, Peresh Leclerc, for the preservation of their lives, and those of the remaining women and children, and for their delivery at some of the British posts, unless ransomed by traders in the Indian country. It appears that the wounded prisoners were not considered as included in the stipulation, and a horrid scene ensued upon their being brought into camp.

"An old squaw, infuriated by the loss of friends, or excited by the sanguinary scenes around her, seemed possessed by a demoniac ferocity. She seized a stable-fork and assaulted one miserable victim, who lay groaning and writhing in the agony of his wounds, aggravated by the scorching beams of the sun. With a delicacy of feeling scarcely to have been expected under such circumstances Wau-bee-nee-mah stretched a mat across two poles, between me and this dreadful scene. I was thus spared in some degree a view of its horrors, although I could not entirely close my ears to the cries of the sufferer. The following night five more of the wounded prisoners were tomahawked."

*Such were Mrs. Helm's experiences during the fight. In the meantime the Americans, after their first attack by the Indians, charged upon those who had concealed themselves in a sort of ravine, intervening between the sand-banks and the prairie. The latter gathered themselves into a body, and after some hard fighting, in which the number of the whites had become reduced to twenty-eight, this little band succeeded in breaking through the enemy, and gaining a rising ground, not far from the Oak Woods. Further contest now seeming hopeless, Lieutenant Helm sent Peresh Leclerc, a half breed boy in the service of Mr. Kinzie, who had accompanied the detachment and fought manfully on their side, to propose terms of capitulation. It was stipulated that the lives of all the survivors should be spared, and a ransom permitted as soon as practicable.

*Mrs. Helm is represented by the female figure in the bronze group at the foot of 18th street, donated to the City of Chicago by the late Mr. Pullman to commemorate the Massacre.

Those of the family of Mr. Kinzie who had remained in the boat, near the mouth of the river, were carefully guarded by Kee-po-tah and another Indian. They had seen the smoke—then the blaze—and immediately after, the report of the first tremendous discharge sounded in their ears. Then all was confusion. They realized nothing until they saw an Indian come towards them from the battle-ground, leading a horse on which sat a lady, apparently wounded. "That is Mrs. Heald," cried Mrs. Kinzie. "That Indian will kill her. Run, Chandonnai," (to one of Mr. Kinzie's clerks,) "take the mule that is tied there, and offer it to him to release her."

Her captor, by this time, was in the act of disengaging her bonnet from her head, in order to scalp her. Chandonnai ran up, and offered the mule as a ransom, with the promise of ten bottles of whiskey as soon as they should reach his village. The latter was a strong temptation.

"But," said the Indian, "she is badly wounded—she will die. Will you give me the whisky at all events?"

Chandonnai promised that he would, and the bargain was concluded. The savage placed the lady's bonnet on his own head, and, after an ineffectual effort on the part of some squaws to rob her of her shoes and stockings, she was brought on board the boat, where she lay moaning with pain from the many bullet wounds she had received in both arms.

The horse Mrs. Heald had ridden was a fine, spirited animal, and, being desirous of possessing themselves of it uninjured, the Indians had aimed their shots so as to disable the rider, without injuring the steed.

She had not lain long in the boat, when a young Indian of savage aspect was seen approaching. A buffalo robe was hastily drawn over her, and she was admonished to suppress all sound of complaint, as she valued her life.

The heroic woman remained perfectly silent, while the savage drew near. He had a pistol in his hand, which he rested on the side of the boat, while with a fearful scowl, he looked pryingly around. Black Jim, one of the servants, who stood in the bow of the boat,

seized an ax that lay near, and signed to him that if he shot, he would cleave his skull; telling him that the boat contained only the family of Shaw-nee-aw-kee. Upon this the Indian retired. It afterwards appeared that the object of his search was a Mr. Burnett, a trader from St. Joseph's, with whom he had some account to settle.

When the boat was at length permitted to return to the house of Mr. Kinzie, and Mrs. Heald was removed to the house, it became necessary to dress her wounds.

Mr. Kinzie applied to an old chief who stood by, and who, like most of his tribe, possessed some skill in surgery, to extract a ball from the arm of the sufferer.

"No, father," replied he. "I cannot do it—it makes me sick here"—(placing his hand on his heart.)

Mr. Kinzie then performed the operation himself, with his pen-knife.

At their own house the family of Mr. Kinzie were closely guarded by their Indian friends, whose intention it was to carry them to Detroit for security. The rest of the prisoners remained at the wigwams of their captors.

Black Partridge, Wau-ban-sec, and Kee-po-tah, with two other Indians, having established themselves in the porch of the building as sentinels, to protect the family from any evil that the young men might be excited to commit, all remained tranquil for a short space after conflagration.

Very soon, however, a party of Indians from the Wabash made their appearance. These were, decidedly the most hostile and implacable of all the tribes of the Pottowattamies.

Being more remote, they had shared less than some of their brethren in the kindness of Mr. Kinzie and his family, and consequently their sentiments of regard for them were less powerful.

Runners had been sent to the village to apprise them of the intended evacuation of the post, as well as of the plan of the Indians assembled to attack the troops.

Thirsting to participate in such a scene, they hurried on; and great was their mortification on arriving at the river Aux Plaines, to meet with a party of their friends having with them their chief Nee-scot-nee-meg, badly wounded, and to learn that the battle was over, the spoils divided, and the scalps all taken.

On arriving at Chicago they blackened their faces, and proceeded towards the dwelling of Mr. Kinzie.

From his station on the piazza Black Partridge had watched their approach, and his fears were particularly awakened for the safety of Mrs. Helm (Mr. Kinzie's step-daughter,) who had recently come to the post, and was personally unknown to the more remote Indians. By his advice she was made to assume the ordinary dress of a French woman of the country; namely a short gown and petticoat, with a blue cotton handkerchief wrapped around her head. In this disguise she was conducted by Black Partridge himself to the house of Ouilmette, a Frenchman with a half-breed wife, who formed a part of the establishment of Mr. Kinzie, and whose dwelling was close at hand.

It so happened that the Indians came first to this house, in their search for prisoners. As they approached, the inmates, fearful that the fair complexion and general appearance of Mrs. Helm might betray her for an American, raised a large feather bed and placed her under the edge of it, upon the bed-stead, with her face to the wall. Mrs. Bisson, a half-breed, the sister of Ouilmette's wife, then seated herself with her sewing upon the front of the bed.

It was a hot day in August, and the feverish excitement of fear and agitation, together with her position, which was nearly suffocating, became so intolerable, that Mrs. Helm at length entreated to be released and given up to the Indians.

"I can but die," said she; "let them put an end to my misery at once."

Mrs. Bisson replied, "Your death would be the destruction of us all, for Black Partridge has resolved that if one drop of the blood of your family is spilled, he will

take the lives of all concerned in it, even his nearest friends; and if once the work of murder commences, there will be no end of it, so long as there remains one white person or half breed in the country."

This expostulation nerved Mrs. Helm with fresh resolution.

The Indians entered, and she could occasionally see them from her hiding-place, gliding about, and stealthily inspecting every part of the room, though without making any ostensible search, until, apparently satisfied that there was no one concealed, they left the house.

All this time Mrs. Bisson had kept her seat upon the side of the bed, calmly assorting and arranging the patch-work of the quilt on which she was engaged, and preserving an appearance of the utmost tranquillity, although she knew not but that the next moment she might receive a tomahawk in her brain. Her self-command unquestionably saved the lives of all present.

From Ouilmette's house the party of Indians proceeded to the dwelling of Mr. Kinzie. They entered the parlor in which the family were assembled with their faithful protectors, and seated themselves upon the floor in silence.

Black Partridge perceived from their moody and revengeful looks what was passing in their minds, but he dared not remonstrate with them. He only observed in a low tone to Wau-ban-see,—

"We have endeavored to save our friends, but it is in vain—nothing will save them now."

At this moment a friendly whoop was heard from a party of new-comers on the opposite bank of the river. Black Partridge sprang to meet their leader, as the canoes in which they had hastily embarked touched the bank near the house.

"Who are you?" demanded he.

"A man. Who are you?"

"A man like yourself. But tell me who you are"—meaning, tell me your disposition, and for which side you are.

"I am a Sau-ga-nash." *i.e.* an "Englishman,"—a friend.

"Then make all speed to the house—your friend is in danger, and you alone can save him."

Billy Caldwell, for it was he, entered the parlor with a calm step, and without a trace of agitation in his manner. He deliberately took off his accoutrements and placed them with his rifle behind the door, then saluted the hostile savages.

"How now, my friends. A good-day to you. I was told there were enemies here, but I am glad to find only friends. Why have you blackened your faces? Is it that you are mourning for the friends you have lost in battle?" (purposely misunderstanding this token of evil designs) "Or is it that you are fasting? If so, ask our friend, here, and he will give you to eat. He is the Indian's friend, and never yet refused them what they had need of."

Thus taken by surprise, the savages were ashamed to acknowledge their bloody purpose. They, therefore, said modestly that they came to beg of their friends some white cotton in which to wrap their dead before interring them. This was given to them, with some other presents, and they took their departure peaceably from the premises.

On the third day after the battle, the family of Mr. Kinzie, with the clerks of the establishment, were put into a boat, under the care of Francois, a half-breed interpreter, and conveyed to St. Joseph's, where they remained until the following November, under the protection of To-pee-nee-bee's band. They were then conducted to Detroit, under the escort of Chandonnai and their trusty Indian friend, Kee-po-tah, and delivered up, as prisoners of war, to Colonel McKee, the British Indian Agent.

Mr. Kinzie was not allowed to leave St. Joseph's with his family, his Indian friends insisting on his remaining and endeavoring to secure some remnant of his scattered property. During his excursions with them for that purpose, he wore the costume and paint of the tribe, in order to escape capture and perhaps death at the hands of those who were still thirsting for blood.

In time, however, his anxiety for his family induced him to follow them to Detroit, where, in the month of January, he was received and paroled by General Proctor.

Lieutenant Helm was carried by some friendly Indians to their village on the Au Sable, and thence to Peoria, where he was liberated by the intervention of Mr. Thomas Forsyth, the half-brother of Mr. Kinzie. Mrs. Helm accompanied her parents to St. Joseph, where they resided in the family of Alexander Robinson, receiving from them all possible kindness and hospitality for several months.

After their arrival in Detroit, Mrs. Helm was joined by her husband.

It had been a stipulation of General Hull at the surrender of Detroit, which took place the day after the massacre at Chicago, that the inhabitants should be permitted to remain undisturbed in their homes. Accordingly, the family of Mr. Kinzie took up their quarters with their friends in the old mansion, which many will still recollect as standing on the north-west corner of Jefferson Avenue and Wayne Street.

Feelings of indignation and sympathy were constantly aroused in the hearts of the citizens during the winter that ensued. They were almost daily called upon to witness the cruelties practiced upon the American prisoners brought in by their Indian captors. Those who could scarcely drag their wounded, bleeding feet over the frozen ground, were compelled to dance for the amusement of the savages.

Everything that could be made available among the effects of the citizens was offered to ransom their countrymen from the hands of these inhuman beings. The prisoners brought in from the river Raisin—those unfortunate men who were permitted, after their surrender to General Proctor, to be tortured and murdered by inches by his savage allies—excited the sympathies and called for the action of the whole community. Private houses were turned into hospitals, and everyone went forward to get possession of as many as possible of the survivors. To effect this, even the articles of their apparel

were bartered by the ladies of Detroit, as they watched from their doors or windows the miserable victims carried about for sale.

In the dwelling of Mr. Kinzie one large room was devoted to the reception of the sufferers. Few of them survived.

Mr. Kinzie, as has been related, joined his family at Detroit in the month of January. A short time after, suspicions arose in the mind of General Proctor that he was in correspondence with General Harrison, who was now at Fort Meigs, and who was believed to be meditating an advance on Detroit. Lieutenant Watson, of the British army, waited upon Mr. Kinzie one day with an invitation to the quarters of General Proctor on the opposite side of the river, saying he wished to speak with him on business. Quite unsuspecting, he complied with the invitation, when to his surprise he was ordered into confinement, and strictly guarded in the house of his former partner, Mr. Patterson, of Sandwich. Finding that he did not return to his home, Mrs. Kinzie informed some of the Indian chiefs, his particular friends, who immediately repaired to the headquarters of the commanding officer, demanded "their friend's" release, and brought him back to his home. After waiting a time until a favorable opportunity presented itself, the General sent a detachment of Dragoons to arrest Mr. Kinzie. They had succeeded in carrying him away and crossing the river with him. Just at this moment a party of friendly Indians made their appearance.

"Where is the Shaw-nee-aw-kee?" was the first question.

"There," replied his wife, pointing across the river, "in the hands of the red-coats, who are taking him away again."

The Indians ran to the river, seized some canoes that they found there, and, crossing over to Sandwich, compelled General Proctor a second time to forego his intentions.

A third time this officer made the attempt, and succeeded in arresting Mr. Kinzie and conveying him heavily ironed to Fort Malden, in Canada, at the mouth of the

Detroit River. Here he was at first treated with great severity, but after a time the rigor of his confinement was somewhat relaxed, and he was permitted to walk on the bank of the river for air and exercise.

On the 10th of September, as he was taking his promenade under the close supervision of a guard of soldiers, the whole party were startled by the sound of guns upon Lake Erie, at no great distance below. What could it mean? It must be Commodore Barclay firing into some of the Yankees. The firing continued. The hour allotted the prisoner for his daily walk expired, but neither he nor his guard observed the lapse of time, so anxiously were they listening to what they now felt sure was an engagement between ships of war. At length Mr. Kinzie was reminded that the hour for his return to confinement had arrived. He petitioned for another half-hour.

"Let me stay" said he, "till we can learn how the battle has gone."

Very soon a sloop appeared under press of sail rounding the point, and presently two gun-boats in chase of her.

"She is running—she bears the British colors," cried he—"yes, yes, they are lowering—she is striking her flag. Now," turning to the soldiers, "I will go back to prison contented—I know how the battle has gone."

The sloop was the "Little Belt," the last of the squadron captured by the gallant Perry on that memorable occasion which he announced in the immortal words:

"We have met the enemy, and they are ours."

Matters were growing critical, and it was necessary to transfer all prisoners to a place of greater security than the frontier was now likely to be. It was resolved therefore to send Mr. Kinzie to the mother-country. He had been taken from the bosom of his family, where he was living quietly under the parole which he had received, and protected by the stipulations of the surrender. He had been kept for months in confinement. Now he was placed on horseback under a strong guard, who announced that they had orders to shoot him

through the head if he offered to speak to a person upon the road. He was tied upon the saddle to prevent his escape, and thus they set out for Quebec. A little incident occurred, which will help to illustrate the course invariably pursued towards our citizens at this period by the British army on the Northwestern frontier.

The saddle on which Mr. Kinzie rode had not been properly fastened, and, owing to the rough motion of the animal on which it was, it turned, so as to bring the rider into a most awkward and painful position. His limbs being fastened, he could not disengage himself, and in this manner he was compelled by those who had charge of him to ride until he was nearly exhausted, before they had the humanity to release him.

Arrived at Quebec, he was put on board a small vessel to be sent to England. The vessel when a few days out at sea was chased by an American frigate and driven into Halifax. A second time she set sail, when she sprung a leak and was compelled to put back.

The attempt to send him across the ocean was now abandoned, and he was returned to Quebec. Another step, equally inexplicable with his arrest, was soon after taken. This was, his release and that of Mr. Macomb, of Detroit, who was also in confinement in Quebec, and the permission given them to return to their friends and families, although the war was not yet ended. It may possibly be imagined that in the treatment these gentlemen received, the British commander-in-chief sheltered himself under the plea of their being "native-born British subjects", and perhaps when it was ascertained that Mr. Kinzie was indeed a citizen of the United States it was thought safest to release him.

In the meantime, General Harrison at the head of his troops had reached Detroit. He landed on the 29th of September. All the citizens went forth to meet him—Mrs. Kinzie was of the number. The General accompanied her to her home, and took up his abode there. On his arrival he was introduced to Kee-po-tah, who happened to be on a visit to the family at that time. The General had seen the chief the preceding year at the Council at Vincennes, and the meeting was one of great cordiality and interest.

Fort Dearborn was rebuilt in 1816, on a larger scale than the former fort, and, on the return of the troops, the bones of the unfortunate Americans who had been massacred four years previously, were collected and buried.

In this same year Mr. Kinzie and his family again returned to Chicago, where he at once undertook to collect the scattered remnants of his property—a most disheartening task. He found his various trading-posts abandoned, his clerks scattered, and his valuable furs, goods, etc., lost or destroyed.

In real estate, however, he was rich—for he owned nearly all the land on the North side of the Chicago River, and many acres on the South and West sides, as well as all of what was known as "Kinzie's Addition."

At the present day the "Kinzie School," and the street which bears his name, are all that remain to remind this generation of the pioneer on whose land now stands the wonderful City of Chicago.

In 1818, through the influence of two of his warm friends, Mr. Ramsey Crooks and Mr. Robert Stuart, Mr. Kinzie secured a clerkship in the American Fur Company for his son, "John Harris." The headquarters of the Company were in Mackinac, where Mr. and Mrs. Stuart insisted on taking young John into their own family. With these delightful friends he made his home for the next five years.

Shortly after the return of the family to Chicago, James Kinzie left the home of his mother, Mrs. Benjamin Hall, in Virginia, and came back to his father. Here he was at once made welcome. His father aided him financially, and Mrs. Kinzie was his affectionate and considerate friend. He repaid her by unfailing respect and regard. Although she had been dead for several years when his second daughter was born, the child was named "Eleanor" after her.

James became a valued citizen of Chicago, and took an active part in her early development.

Life was very quiet and monotonous in these days. There were few social events of any importance; there-

fore a marriage in Mr. Kinzie's family became quite an event. Ellen Marion Kinzie, or, as she was usually called, "Nellie Kinzie," was the first white child born outside of Fort Dearborn, December 20th, 1805. She was educated at Mount Holyoke Seminary, in Massachusetts, and, shortly after her return home from that institution, (in 1823), she married Dr. Alexander Wolcott, formerly of Boston, but now stationed in Chicago as Indian Agent.

Six years later John Harris Kinzie married Miss Juliette A. Magill, of Middletown, Conn. She was a niece of Dr. Alexander Wolcott's.

Mr. and Mrs. John H. Kinzie occupied a prominent place in the early history of Chicago. Their hospitable home was the center of its social and literary life, and its foremost charities were organized and supported mainly by their efforts.

Mr. John H. Kinzie, Mr. George W. Dole and Mr. Robt. A. Kinzie, gave the land and furnished the money to erect St. James Church, the first church built in Chicago.

Mrs. Kinzie was the authoress of "WAU-BUN."

In 1828, the youngest daughter, Maria Indiana, became the wife of Lieut. David Hunter, of the 5th Infantry, U. S. A., while Robert Allan, the youngest son, married in 1833, (five years after his father's death), Gwinthlean, the youngest daughter of Col. John Whistler, U. S. A., and a first cousin to the celebrated artist, James McNeil Whistler. She was remarkably beautiful, and Charles Dickens pronounced her the handsomest woman he met in America.

Mr. Kinzie, recognizing the importance of the geographical position of Chicago, and the vast fertility of the surrounding country, had always foretold its eventual prosperity. Unfortunately, he was not permitted to witness the realization of his predictions.

On the 6th of January, 1828, he was stricken with apoplexy, and, in a few hours, death closed his useful and energetic career.

John Kinzie was not only the sturdy pioneer, but also the courteous gentleman.

To keen business ability he united the strictest honesty, and to the most dauntless courage, a tender and generous heart.

As the loyal devoted friend of the Red man, tradition has handed down the name of Shaw-nee-aw-kee throughout all the tribes of the Northwest.

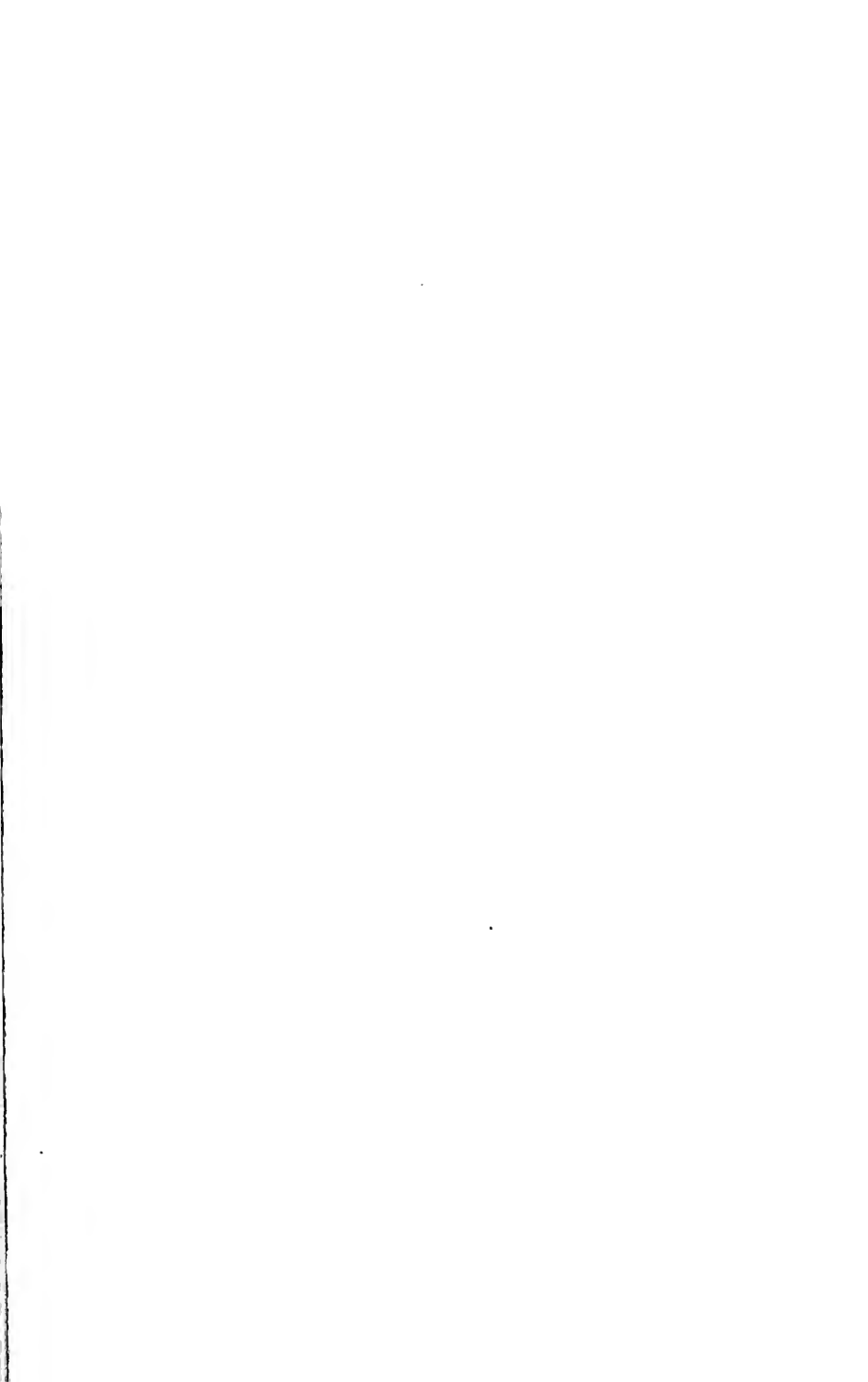
His remains rest in Graceland Cemetery in the city of his love—Chicago.











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JOHN KINZIE, THE FATHER OF CHICAGO SAVAN



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